THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (d). The road from Moradabad- Tanda-Bajpur-Haldwani is not a Defence road. As such no information about this road is available in the Ministry of defence.

Import of Palm Oil and Rubber

230. SHRI RAM TAHAL CHOUDHARY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the steps being taken by the Government to reduce the import of palm oil and rubber;

(b) whether new areas have been identified to grow their crops; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c). All out efforts are being made for reducing the import of rubber by increasing natural rubber production within the country. These include:-

I) Price protection for indigenously produced rubber in order to encourage rubber growers to produce more rubber.

ii) Undertaking comprehensive research on all basic as well as adaptive aspects of cultivation and production at the Rubber Research Institute of India and transferring proven technology on extensive scale to rubber growers through Board's extension service machinery.

iii) Implementation of development schemes designed to expand area under plantation, replant old and uneconomic plantations, promote use of high Yielding cultivatrs, improve yield from existing plantations and upgrade quality of rubber.

iv) Laying emphasis on spreading rubber cultivation to non-traditional areas.

Future potential for expansion of rubber area is estimated to be about 11,50,000 hectares spread over in the North-Eastern Region and States like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Andamans & Nicobar Islands etc.

With regard to Palm Oil, information will be collected and laid on the Table of the House.

[*English*]

Exports

231. SHRI DILEEP SINGH BHURIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the exports have registered a downward trend in recent months;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps being taken to increase the exports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) According to the provisional figures, India's exports during the first half of the current financial year i.e. April-September, 1991 amounted to Rs. 18711 crores as compared to Rs 15097 crores during April-September, 1990, thereby registering a growth of 23.9% in rupee terms.

Export growth in the second quarter of 1991-92 showed some improvement over the performance in the first quarter in rupee terms. As against a growth of 10.1% in April-June, 1991 over the corresponding period in 1990, exports registered a growth rate of 37.3% during July-September, 1991.

Exports to Rupee Payment Area have been deliberately compressed on account

of difficulties being experienced by these countries to supply necessary imports to India. As a result, exports to Rupee Payment area declined by 39% in rupee terms and about 54% in US dollar terms during April-September, 1991 over the corresponded period in 1990. During April-September, 1991, exports to General Currency Area increased by 39.4% in rupee terms and 5.4% in US dollar terms.

(b) The reasons for low growth in exports include decline in exports to countries in Rupee Payment Area, decline in global output and exports, recession in major developed countries, depressed world prices for some of our agricultural products, import curbs imposed on account of critical Balance of Payments situation which affected our domestic production, and steep hike in interest rates on export credit, etc.

(c) The Government introduced a package of trade policy reforms aimed at strengthening of export incentives, eliminating substantial volume of import licensing and optimal import compression. REP licences have been replaced by a new instrument named Eximscrips. These will be the means of obtaining access to certain categories of imports of raw materials, components and spares. The system of advance licensing as an instrument of export promotion has also been strengthened. Government has decided to allow established exporters to open foreign currency accounts in approved banks and allow exporters to raise external credits, pay for export related imports from such accounts, and credit export proceeds to such accounts. Besides, Government have taken other steps which include reducing controls through licensing, simplification of procedures for export, activisation of Board of Trade, bilateral discussion with selected countries, interaction with national organisations of trade and industry,etc.

Expenditure Tax Payable by Air-Conditioned Hotels

232. SHRI SHARAD DIGHE:Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of hotels in Bombay which were partly or fully air-conditioned before October, 1, 1991;

(b) the number of hotels which have done away with air-conditioners to avoid payment of 15 per cent expenditure tax payable from October,1,1991 on food and drinks sold in hotels and restaurants which have air-conditioners;

(c) the estimated collection of this tax during the current financial year; and

(d) the estimated loss to the Government on account of closing of air-conditioned hotels in Bombay?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI RAMESHWAR THAKUR): (a) , (b) and (d). No such data is available in the Ministry. However, all possible steps are being taken to ensure that persons liable to Expenditure-tax do not escape from their liability.

(c) Rs. 150 crores.

[*Translation*]

Trade With Japan, France and USA

233. SHRI VILASRAO NAGNATHRAO GUNDEWAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the figures regarding trade conducted by India with Japan, France and USA during the last two years; and

(b) the steps being taken to promote trade and remove the imbalance in trade in hard currency and soft currency areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) India's trade with Japan,